

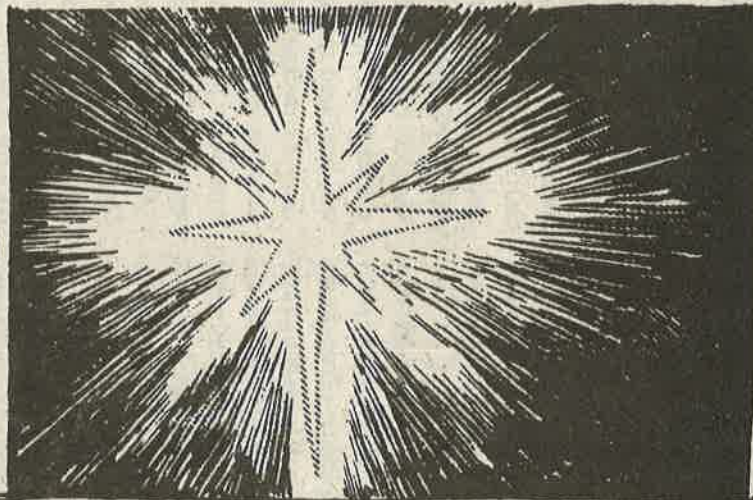
# via pacis

## Newsletter of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

Volume 17, Number 4

Advent 1993

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## Advent Reflection

# The Return to Nakedness

by Andrea Loeffelholz

When I was a child I loved this time of Advent in a special way. Everything was changing — outside and inside. The trees lost their leaves, becoming bare and less colored. It became dark earlier. Snow and a certain smell of winter arrived.

Our house looked different to me. We used to move into the warmer living room. Certain things appeared: the wreath with candles, pyramids, joss candles and the figures to burn them in, a calendar that leads through Advent until Christmas. Food and drinks changed. Songs.

My family became somehow closer together. My parents were home more often in the evenings, because you could not do much work outside. It was a time for stories and handicrafts, filled with many customs.

For me it was a rich and deep experience. I felt the changes in nature and in my life synchronizing. I always feel this when the first snow is falling, covering the earth like a blanket that wraps you up at night. It fills me somehow with peace.

I think winter is the meditation of nature, the time of rest. The soil has the opportunity to regenerate itself. Trees give their leaves up. They are only ballast by now. The fields are harvested. Everything becomes kind of bare, goes back to its own self, to its substance.

I understand Advent to be an invitation to let go all I've col-

lected this summer: my experiences, roles, activities, entertainments, and to reflect on them, to meditate, to look into my own face, to learn and to grow inward.

This is not all quiet and smooth. When you give up your diversions, take on yourself, you may incur heavy storms. When you are always running away from yourself, what do you know? If you are empty inside, what are you able to express?

The Biblical lectures for Advent are pictures: of the desert, changes, of coming home, the great vision of peace, the roots

that will generate new life. Advent is a way in which I come closer to the mystery of life, that I celebrate Christmas. It is birth — the gift of life itself.

My understanding of Advent is a mixture of experience, vision, and longing. I know it seems nearly impossible in our "modern" world, but I also know that the way we live is wrong. Eating tomatoes 12 months a year, always pushing for 100% efficiency, functioning and busy. It makes us numb, sick and very easily manipulated. Our lives become a big grey monotony.

As every season has its distinct face, so need the times of my life their own expressions and rituals. Expression needs impression, noise the silence, action contemplation.

✱

## Advent

Withdraw

Rest

Let go

Come back to  
yourself

Celebrate



## The Origins and Meaning of Advent

by Ed Bloomer

The following italicized excerpts are from the Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs by Father Francis X. Weiser.

*"The Celebration of Christ's nativity on December 25 was introduced as a special feast in Rome about the middle of the fourth century. It quickly spread through the Roman Empire of the West.... Since it was one of the main feasts of the Christian year, a spiritual preparation soon began to be held [including a period of fasting]. This practice of keeping a penitential season [Advent] before Christmas spread all through France, Spain, and later also to Germany....*

*"In Rome the celebration of Advent originated considerably later, during the sixth century. There the season comprised only four or five Sundays.... Unlike the Gallic Church, Rome had no established fast. Advent in Rome was a festive and joyful time of preparation for the Feast of the Lord's Nativity, without peni-*

*tential character.*

*"In the eighth century the nonpenitential Advent of Rome clashed with the penitential observance of the much larger Gallic Advent.... After a few centuries of vacillation there emerged a final structure of Advent celebration which combined features of both traditions.... This compromise was completed in the thirteenth century. From that time, the liturgical observance of Advent has remained practically unchanged."*

Advent leads and lets us (the world) draw closer together in solidarity with those without. I believe this spirit (God) helps us to heal our inner being as well as fuse with family, friends, neighbors and nations. Sometimes we do not feel this because of the illusion of commercialism and its hustle for consumer goods. Underlining all of this, however, the spirit (God) subtly leads us on to his birthday in the manger — in our lives — and helps us to count our blessings and share with the beat up people in our world! ✱

## Gift Ideas

Since Christmas is coming, we would like to ask our readers to consider gifts to the guests at the DMCW. Hats, gloves, scarves or any winter wear is always needed and appreciated. Toys for our child guests are always a big hit. please do not bring war toys or toys which encourage aggressive behavior in children.

We are also in great need of blankets. We give these out to folks on the street and people who cannot afford them, as well as to our guests.

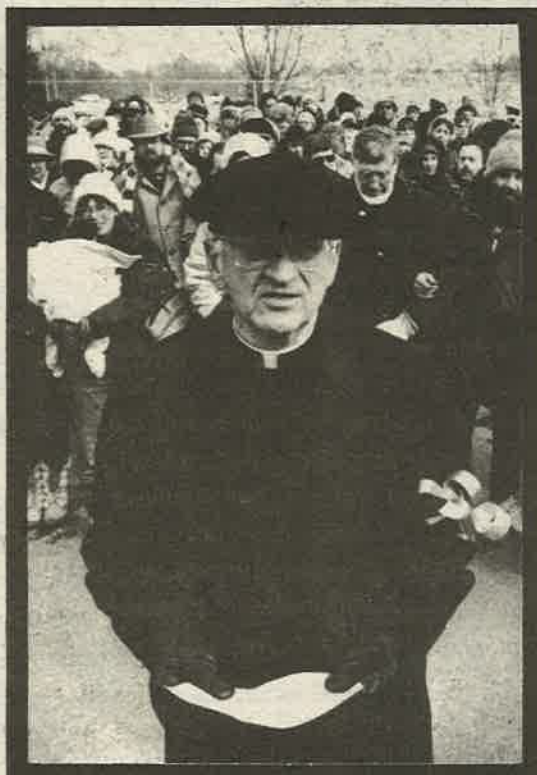
Finally, we need help renovating a bathroom and creating a laundry room. Anyone with carpentry/finishing skills who can help us out would be greatly appreciated.

Happy Holidays!

-For the DMCW, Norman



## Consider Christmas Gift to Dingman Memorial Fund



Bishop Maurice Dingman

The Bishop Dingman Memorial Catholic Worker Fund has just over \$1,000, enough to pay for roofing work done this autumn on our hospitality houses. There are other repairs too numerous to mention yet to be done. They include: plumbing, electrical, dry wall, carpentry and masonry work.

At the DMCW complex we provide temporary shelter, housing, meals and food donations to thousands of individuals each year. In fact, there were 45 folks living at the DMCW at this writing (Nov. 20).

All labor is volunteer and funding is strictly from individuals, churches and civic groups. The Dingman Fund was set up to help renovate and maintain our buildings and property. As you consider your giving this holiday season, please make a contribution to the Dingman Memorial Fund. Please mail your gift c/o the DMCW. Thanks and have a blessed holiday season.



## via pacis

Newsletter of the Des Moines  
Catholic Worker Community

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Msgr. Ligutti House 1301 - 8th St.  
Lazarus House 1317 - 8th St.  
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### Community Members

Jessica Barnhill, Ed Bloomer, Carla Dawson and children:  
Julius, Joshua, and Jordan  
Andrea Loeffelholz, Norman Searah

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## What's Happening

by Frank Cordaro

Greetings from Des Moines. In this Advent issue of *vp* we have our regular features: Carla's Community article, Norman's Whereabouts, Resistance Notes, and the Friday Night Mass schedule.

Especially for this issue, Andrea has written a reflection on the meaning of Advent.

Andrea and Jessica will soon be leaving the DMCW after spending a year at the house as part of their term with Brethren Voluntary Service (BVS). Each has written a good-bye piece for this *vp* and both of them will be missed.

Since BVS'ers Liz Richardson and Janice Baker have already moved on the "Help Wanted" sign is officially hanging on our door at the DMCW.

The newest member of the community, Ed Bloomer introduces himself to the reader and shares with us his thoughts on the season.

Also, in this issue of *vp* is a report on my trip to Germany. It was a nine day, seven city whirlwind tour. Read more about it in the article.

Because it is the holiday season, we ask that you give special attention to our House Needs article and our appeal for the Bishop Dingman Memorial Fund.

Advent is the season of antic-



Sketch by Jim

ipation, it's the season of giving go and letting God enter our world and into our hearts. Please keep the DMCW in your thoughts and prayers. And if you can, come help us do the Work of Mercy. It's good and necessary work, just what is needed in anticipation of the coming of the Lord. \*

## December 28, 1993 Feast of the Holy Innocents Witness at Strat-Com

♦ **Meet at:** Immaculate Conception Church  
2708 S. 24th St., Omaha, NE

♦ **Time:** 8:30 a.m.

♦ **Agenda:** Meet, discuss Strat-Com and Witness; 11:00a.m. - Mass; 12:15 Witness at Strat-Com

For more information contact: Joyce Glenn - (402)

451-5755 or Fr. Frank Cordaro - (712) 325-8830

Sponsored by: Pax Christi, Omaha and Center for Nonviolent Studies



## Friday Mass and Saturday Community Meeting Schedule:

(\*All Saturday Community Meetings are open and are held at Dingman House.)

Fri., Dec. 10 with Fr. Frank Cordaro  
\*Sat., Dec. 11 Community Meeting - 8:00 a.m.

Fri., Dec. 17 with Fr. Dave Polich

Fri., Dec. 24 Christmas Eve - No Mass

Fri., Dec. 31 New Years Eve - No Mass

Fri., Jan. 7, 1994 with Fr. Mike Amadeo

Fri., Jan. 14 with Fr. Frank Cordaro  
\*Sat., Jan. 15 Community Meeting - 8:00 a.m.

Fri., Jan. 21 with Fr. Dave Polich

Fri., Jan. 28 with Fr. Jim Wilwerding

Fri., Feb. 4 with Fr. T. Pfeffer (En Español)

Fri., Feb. 11 with Fr. Frank Cordaro  
\*Sat., Feb. 12 Community Meeting - 8:00 a.m.

Fri., Feb. 18 with Fr. Jim Wilwerding

Fri., Feb. 25 with Fr. Dave Polich

Fri., Mar. 4 with Fr. Frank Cordaro  
\*Sat., Mar. 5 Community Meeting - 8:00 a.m.



# Community News

by Carla Dawson

Everyone! I hope this article finds you all doing well. I'm writing this article on my fifth or maybe fifth deadline. A lot has been going on at Worker Houses since I last wrote. First, about community members: We are down to five, by December we will be down to three. Jeff, Lori, and children Jeffrey, Norma, and Sheila left in the first week of October.

Many of you know, living in community takes a lot out of a person mentally, physically and last, but not least spiritual-

It is always hard when people leave. It is like losing a part of yourself, and you hope that the person leaving is going on to good things. You are left to wonder if their leaving can be a good thing or their past contributions carried on by the ones left behind.

Someone said to me "what community?" I hope with time, patience and the answer will be "This Community."

In the last four years that I've been here, I've seen a lot of changes: some good, some not so good. It is my hope that we

can stay focused and get back to more social justice issues. We used to be the leaders in a lot of areas, but now we are the followers (who are not always following).

Janice has also left us to go to Paris and be an au pair. Liz, another BVSer and Catholic Worker, left us in mid-September. She was hoping to go to New York but ended up in Seattle, Washington.

Their year here was probably by far one of the hardest I've lived through and possibly one of the hardest for them too.

However, we have all come through it well and have grown a lot. In their year here they've gained more confidence and assurance in their own abilities. Being at the Catholic Worker teaches us to relate to the pains and heartache of people in some of their worst times.

Janice, I hope Paris is all and more that you've hoped for. God bless you. I miss you very much. P.S. Write Us.

Liz, you stay in touch too.

From the first paragraph you see that there are five Catholic Workers: Norman, Ed, Jessica, Andrea, and myself. Jessica and Andrea will be leaving at the end of December, but enough of leavings.

We have been busy at the Worker with providing the

same hospitality even though some workers have left. We also have our roof 75% finished. We have replaced windows, put plastic up and handled numerous other things.

There are many groups and people we would like to thank. Two in particular are Dowling High School and Grinnell College.

Let me start with Dowling... a great bunch of students and faculty. Dowling seniors gave up a whole Saturday to come and clean up our houses. We all know how important a Saturday can be when you are a teenager. They were so enthusiastic to come and work.

There wasn't a job too big or small, too dirty or greasy that they didn't do. They washed walls, windows, doors and bathrooms. They threw out old furniture. They moved our compost pile to the garden. And they did all this without grumbling and moaning.

They also had a scavenger hunt for us at the Worker on the following Sunday. They had a U-Haul full of food and cleaning supplies. I am so happy that these students came and worked.

I cannot put into words how



Carla Dawson and her three children: Jordan, Julius and Joshua

my heart feels. I would like to thank all of you for coming and letting us know that there is loving and caring in your generation. I would also like your parents to know that they have a reason to be proud. Thanks one and all for your support. Come back soon.

Grinnell College students came up for their fall vacation to help at the Worker and to help with flood repairs. They were a terrific group of young people. They cleaned out the basements of Lazarus and Dingman House. They put plastic up on the windows. They took our recycling to be recycled. They painted walls and a 100 other things. They were a great bunch and I hope some of them will come up on their weekly Saturday visits.

Grinnellians, as I call them, have been coming up for four or five years the majority of

their Saturdays to do any and everything. Thanks Grinnellians! Hope to see ya soon. You're more than welcome to come back.

There are so many others to thank for supporting us: Dot and her husband Andy Bosman, David from St. Pius, Rom the pie man, St. Paul's Episcopal for their donation to Dingman Fund (yes, we are still asking for money for building repairs), Charlotte and Bart, the Berryhills, Katie and Joe, the vegetable lady, and so many churches who bring dinner faithfully. God bless each and everyone.

I hope the holidays find you well. Please keep us in your prayers. You are all in ours. Without you there would be no Catholic Worker. \*

## Norman's Whereabouts

by Norman Searah

First of all, I would like to say thank you to all the people who have supported the DMCW through the years. And a big thank you to all who are still supporting us!

We are especially grateful to students of Dowling H.S. (Community News) who see us as their Fall Service project. I also want to thank students of St. Theresa's school for their recent projects to help our work.

Finally, I want to thank and recognize the church groups and other organizations who bring meals to the houses to feed our guests and us.

I want to say goodbye and thanks to a special friend of the Worker, Rev. Bob Cook. Bob has

been a friend of the community from the very beginning. At one time he lived in the small first floor bed room in Ligutti House.

Bob has left Cross Ministries at Cottage Grove Presbyterian Church after 20 years of service. He has taken on the responsibility of interim pastor for a Presbyterian Church in Newton Ia. Bob expects to be moving down to El Salvador next summer to minister there.

Thank you Bob for all you have done for so many many people through the years, we sure are going to miss you!

One last thank you to say; it's to all the people who have been staff or community members at the DMCW. To me you're never forgotten and you are always in my prayers. Thanks gang from the bottom of my heart.

(Continued on page 4)

## DMCW Represented at VIVA House Anniversary Celebration

DMCW Community member Norman Searah joined Fr. Frank Cordaro and Michael Sprong for a road trip to Baltimore, MD. The occasion for their visit was the October 9th 25th Anniversary celebration of VIVA House Catholic Worker.

Located in a neighborhood just South of downtown, VIVA House has been serving meals and doing hospitality since 1968.

More than 400 friends of VIVA House gathered for an afternoon/evening program of speeches, food, drink and music. Presentations were given by VIVA House Community, Mary Nelis, a Sinn-Fein Party and City Council Member of Derry, Northern Ireland, and Fr. Frank Cordaro.

Mary is also a Catholic civil rights activist and a survivor of the 1968 "Bloody Sunday" massacre. She spoke com-



From left to right: Mary Nelis, Fr. Frank Cordaro and Charlie King photo by Michael Sprong

pellingly of the repression she and others who support a united Ireland face from the British and Irish who are loyal to the United Kingdom.

Fr. Frank entertained the crowd with wit and stories of nonviolent resistance, featuring his "spilling ashes in front of Jimmy Carter story."

The evening was capped off with a performance by the extraordinary songwriter and singer, Charlie King.

Congratulations to VIVA House! May God continue to bless your community and your great work.



# Affordable Housing Now!



March for Affordable Housing, Downtown Des Moines, Oct 2, 1993

by Andrea Loeffelholz

*"Sometimes people treat us wrong just because.... There comes a time when we have nowhere to sleep. You might not like the places you go to, you just have to deal with it until you find something right. The people you deal with might even be mean, because they have never been homeless. They think they are too clean. Sometimes we get scared but we just have to hold on, because God will be there. Sometimes people seem to treat us wrong just because we don't have a home of our own. People don't understand that homelessness is not a laughing joke. It's time to be serious, especially when you have no one who cares...."*

-anonymous,  
(found in one of the bedrooms in Dingman house)

People who are concerned and involved in the struggle of the cycles of homelessness, poverty, and violence organized a March For Affordable Housing on Oct. 2, 1993.

Several speakers from different organizations\* drew attention to the issue through sharing their experiences and pointing out ideas about what can be done.

Three women, survivors of homelessness and domestic violence, talked about their devastating experiences and their hopes. I was impressed by their courage and strength and empowered by their message. I'm pretty sure they will soon be able to sustain their lives on their own again.

One of these women had been living with three little children on the streets, and she is now a nursing student.

Their message stuck with me: "Don't feel sympathy for us ... help to create fair opportunities for everyone." Human beings need to be treated as personalities, and they need places where they can live and

work in dignity. This is obstructed by interests and values that are not oriented on human beings nature and their needs. These basic needs include harmony, an undamaged environment, wholeness.

We don't understand what we have lost. Everything in our life is ruled by the condition of having money, and this absorbs almost all our attention and energies, drawing us away from our own self.

Why aren't people building more affordable housing? No one wants to waste money. Why do we waste human beings lives, their skills, ideas, energies, by labeling them as second class people for all kinds of reasons and forcing them to a life that is humiliating? What do we expect the consequences to be when we disregard people?

My experience here at the Catholic Worker is that a lot of homeless people are imprisoned in a cycle. Some jump back on the carousel of society, others fall down. After a while the same people are homeless again because of lost jobs,

rising rents, falling wages, illness or whatever.

In order to function, this society needs poor people. When wealth/profit is highly concentrated in a very few hands, it is inevitably taken away from others.

Everything in this world is limited: water, air, my own strength. Accumulation of wealth in a few hands necessarily causes poverty.

In my opinion, if we seriously want to prevent homelessness, we need more profound changes than emergency shelters, job training programs, and marches for affordable housing.

We need many answers: including each individual's personal responsibility to create a society that everyone can live in as human beings. \*

\*such as:

**Carole Bodin**, Director, New Directions Shelter, Des Moines;  
**Pam Carmichael**, Director, HOME, Inc., Des Moines;  
**Karen Kubby**, City Councilmember, Iowa City;  
**Carlos Jayne**, Legislative Advocate, Iowa United Methodist Church;  
**Lana Ross**, Community Resource Director, Mid-Iowa Community Action, Marshalltown;  
**Carol Fennelly**, Community for Creative Non-Violence (homeless shelter in Washington, D.C.)



Lauren Scott, Alice Jacoby and Janie Jacoby participate in Affordable Housing March



Nick Jacoby

## A Few Facts

(from the Des Moines Coalition for the Homeless)

- 16,111 Iowans are homeless (source: State of Iowa report)
- The leading causes of homelessness in Iowa are: falling wages, unemployment, shortage of affordable rental housing, and domestic violence.
- The overwhelming majority of Iowa's homeless population are women and children. Half of them are victims of domestic violence. At least 9,000 are children.

## Norman's Whereabouts Continued

(Continued from page 3)

When the Dowling students were here, one of the students gave me a poster of a teddy bear, and above it is written, "A Hug A Day Keeps Loneliness Away." I really like it because I believe in the good that hugs do for people. I know because I get lonely, even though at the CW there is almost always someone around.

Sometimes, I feel worse when I find that there's no way to help some folks, like when we

are full and have no other place to recommend them to.

Sometimes the only thing I can do is pray for them. Some days I pray a lot; I even pray for my prayers to be answered. Then I pray one more for good measure.

I keep having this dream that I win a sweepstakes. In my dream, when I win I am able to help the folks I can only pray for now. People like me never win sweepstakes, but I say a prayer every once and a while

that I will win.

I believe that praying plays a big part in our relationship with God. Besides praying I also talk to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. I realize that this sounds silly to some people but to me it's all part of being in a relationship with our God. The funny thing is after I pray I don't feel as lonely as I was, before I prayed.

There are other times when I feel helpless, especially when I know we *could* do something

for people or be doing more around the houses, but we just don't have the tools or means to do it. Although I'm learning more about how to fix things around the house, it's frustrating when we don't have the right tools or adequate resources to do the job. If you have tools that you're not using, please bring them to the house.

People who know me, know that I once owned a truck. When it was working, it was a great help for the community.

I had to get rid of the truck cause it broke down too much. We really could use another truck for the community. Christmas coming a little later would really help with the extra work that needs to be done at this time.

I've written enough. I've to go to bed, it's two in the morning and I need to get some prayers before I go to sleep. Thank you for your time. \*





# Travelogue Germany

by Frank Cordaro

*This Autumn I was invited to Germany and share with several different groups about the Catholic Worker Movement, the Resistance Church and my own journey, sponsored by the Frankonia Bureau for Peace Education (FBF), it was a whirl-wind speaking tour of seven cities in nine days. Michael Porzgen, who was at the DMCW in 1992, volunteers at FBF and organized the tour.*

## Thursday, Oct. 26:

I arrived in Frankfurt and was picked up at the airport by Michael. We immediately drove to Nurnberg and visited the offices of FBF to meet with the staff there.

We then drove on to Edermannstadt for my first presentation, an evening program at the Burg Feversstein Castle. My talk was part of a two-day conference for Catholic youth ministers and social workers working for the local diocese.

The castle sits on top of a hill overlooking a valley, a beautiful setting. We got to stay the night in the castle. Now a Catholic retreat center, it was built during the Nazi era as a training center for military communications officers. The Catholic church took over the property after the war.

## Wednesday, Oct. 27:

Following mass and breakfast we headed back to Nurnberg. In the afternoon Michael and I visited the Nazi Rallying Grounds where Hitler and the Nazi party once held mass meetings. Most of the buildings are destroyed or badly run-down. Still, the layout and grand design of the complex are discernible and ominous.

We visited the Museum of "Fascination and Violence" beneath the old rally review stands where Hitler addressed the crowds. The museum is a sobering display and record of the rise and fall of the Nazi party in Nurnberg.

I spent the evening with Michael and friends at a local bar. The beer in Germany is every bit as good as they say.



## Thursday, Oct. 28:

Awoke and boarded a train for Neuwied. Much of the train route runs along the Rhein River. It was a bright, sunny day and the view from the train was breath-taking. As I had been told, Germany is a very beautiful country.

I was also struck by how densely populated the country is (with 61 million people, and 641 people per sq. mile). There are villages and towns scattered across the rural landscape every five to ten miles. Everything in West Germany seems more "tidy" and well kept than in the U.S.

Once in Neuwied, we headed for the German offices of Eirene, the international Christian service for peace organization which sponsored Michael's year at the DMCW. (Eirene is also sponsoring Andrea's time in Des Moines.)

Founded in 1957, by Historic Peace Churches (Brethren and Mennonites) and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Eirene places German volunteers in host countries to work on projects that directly help the poor and further the cause of peace.

We participated in an evening program at Holy Cross Church, a Catholic parish in the neighborhood. It began with a mass followed by my presentation. About 40 people attended.

## Friday, Oct. 29:

We boarded the morning train for Lippinghausen. On the way we made a stop at Cologne to visit the famous Cathedral. It is without a doubt a beautiful building several centuries old, a testimony to human creativity and a true work of art. Well worth the stop.

Still, after touring the Cathedral, I felt a little uneasy. I shared with Michael that I would have a hard time preaching in such a church. Jesus came to replace the great temple of his day with the living temple of his person. In Jesus' day, people placed undue emphasis on the temple building itself and not enough on the people.

In the Cathedral in Cologne, it would be easy to overlook the needs of people, especially the poor, for the beauty of the art and architecture that dominate the building.

Michael said that since it's a national treasure, the best thing about the Cathedral in Cologne is that it has been used to stage protests and make a witness.

No sooner did we walk out of the Cathedral when we came across a protest and witness. Right on the front patio, braced up against the Cathedral was erected a "Wailing Wall For Peace." It is a makeshift structure, mostly of twine and cardboard placards. On each placard there is a message for peace.

This Wailing Wall For Peace has been up since the beginning

to bring attention to the growing problem of homelessness in Cologne and all over Germany. Walter told us that there are several thousand homeless people in Cologne today. Six homeless people had died in a two week period this month. Walter himself has been beat up by youth gangs five times since he started the project.

Both Church and local government authorities want to get rid of the Wall and what it represents. The authorities have taken down the structure several times over the last three years. Each time, Walter and his friends rebuild.



Wailing Wall For Peace at the Cathedral of Cologne.

of the Persian Gulf War. Visitors to the Cathedral are asked to write their personal messages for peace on pieces of cardboard as possible additions to the Wall.

The Wall is the idea and creation of Walter Herrmann, a homeless man, whom we met that day. To insure the safety of the Wall, Walter has set up a "home" for himself right next to the Wall and the Cathedral. It's not much: staked up pieces of cardboard, old wooden crates and piles of old newspapers, covered with a tarp and held together with twine — a very vulnerable and precarious place, in stark contrast to the secure and massive Cathedral building.

Along with the focus of peace, the Wall has also helped

Michael and I were honored to be invited into Walter's simple home. There was barely room for the three of us to fit inside. As we sat there talking, I could not help but sense the irony of Walter's home right next to the great Cathedral.

Surely Jesus would be more at home in Walter's shack than in the massive building right next door. In Cologne we visited two Cathedrals: one of brick and block, the other of with flesh and bone.

Back on the train, we made it to Lippinghausen and the Friedenskotten (Peace Cottage), a non-violence training center and community begun in the 1970's. We met Eric Bachman, a U.S. citizen who was a C.O. during the Vietnam War. He did his alternative service in

Germany with the Brethren Volunteers. He's still in Germany working on peace and justice projects including the crisis in Bosnia.

## Saturday, Oct. 30:

After an early breakfast and then a long walk in the lush woods just outside of Lippinghausen, we took the train to Dortmund. There we were met by Bernd Buscher.

Bernd is one of the Friends of the Catholic Worker, a group composed of Germans who have lived and worked at Catholic Workers in the United States. Bernd and his wife Sabine lived and worked at the Davenport and Rock Island CWs.

We had supper at their home along with Johst, a chaplain for the local city jail. He arranged for us to attend the Sunday morning services for the prisoners.

## Sunday, Oct. 31:

At the jail we attended the 8 a.m. service which was attended by 25 prisoners. I got to give the homily. It was an honor.

The place reminded me of county jails I've been in the States. It's an old prison that was first used by the Nazis. Because of a recent increase in inmate suicides, the warden had the whole place repainted and filled with a variety of plants. It's a nice touch, but doesn't take away the cold, hard face of prison. The jail houses up to 450 prisoners.

In the afternoon, I was honored to facilitate the first Catholic Worker Round Table Discussion with 45 people at "Cana" C.W. Soup Kitchen.

The soup kitchen serves an evening meal three times a week to about 120 people. Some of the Friends of the Catholic Worker helped start the effort.

Taking personal responsibility and starting a soup kitchen without official government or institutional church help is unheard of in Germany.

Typically the government relies on Church agencies to run the bulk of official government social programs. In Germany the government collects a national Church tax and then pays the churches to cover the costs of social programs.

The funds are equally divided

(Continued on page 6)



# T ravelogue G ermany

(Continued from page 5)

by Catholic and Protestant Churches, based on the number of people who claim a church identification on their tax forms. Over 90% of West German's claim a religious identification.

Because of this arrangement, the Church is looked upon as just another government agency. The churches are the second highest employer in the nation behind the government; 70% of all social workers work for a Church agency.

The German social welfare system is more responsive than its U.S. counterpart. The holes in their social safety net are smaller than ours. Still, the holes are getting bigger. With the added strain of including the East into the national social welfare formula and with the global economic slump, less monies are available for social programs.

For example, Dortmund was once a major steel center in Europe. Ten years ago they were stealing jobs from Pittsburgh; now the Japanese steel industry is stealing jobs from them. There is about 14% unemployment in the Dortmund area.

These factors, plus the growing number of homeless people makes starting a Catholic Worker soup kitchen in Dortmund all the more necessary.

It was so good to meet folks from Germany who had been to the States and worked at Catholic Workers. I felt like I was with family — a foreign cousin visiting relatives.

## Monday, Nov. 1:

This morning we boarded the train for Leipzig, the only East German city on my tour. The second largest city in former East Germany, it had over 800,000 people in 1965. During the last year of communist rule, over 120,000 people left the city. It now has 500,000 citizens.

A very old city, rich with culture, art and history, Leipzig is a financial and trading center for the region. During the uprising of 1989, it took the lead in bringing down the old regime.

We were met at the station by staff members of Caritas, the Catholic Social Welfare agency and our sponsoring organization in Leipzig. We took a short walking tour of the inner city and then attended the

weekly Monday night prayer services for peace at the Nicola Church which was a rally site for unrest in 1989.

Later that night we were treated to a supper at the famous Auerbach's Cellar restaurant where the fictional character Faust is said to have rode a barrel filled with choice wine out of the lower cellar to win a bet.

At the restaurant we met up with Sr. Rita Kallabis, the director of Caritas in Leipzig. She told us about the work of Caritas, which has changed dramatically since the end of communist rule, when all social programs were run by the State.

Today the social welfare system in the East is in complete disarray. The limited Church structures are trying to fill the gap.

Before the fall of the communist government, Caritas in Leipzig had only six people on staff. Today they have over one hundred. Still, the increase is hardly sufficient.

I also learned that another great difference between Germans in the East and the West is that less than 10% of East Germans claim to be Protestant and less than 2% claim to be Catholic.

We spent the night at Sr. Rita's home. She lives with four other sisters in a nine flat

apartment building that also houses their parish priest and the worship space. It's what is called a House Church, and they are common in the East.

## Tuesday, Nov. 2:

In the morning I spoke to 15 social workers at the Caritas offices about the welfare system in the United States. I told them about the U.S. Catholic Church commitment to self-empowerment programs through the Campaign for Human Development. The concept of neighborhood initiatives to address particular local issues was completely out of their experience.

Much of what we take for granted about grassroots participatory democracy is new to folks here. In the old state everything was directed from above, from a centralized office. Personal initiative was considered dangerous.

Not only must East Germans build a whole new social and economic system, they must also develop a whole new way of thinking and of how to take action. There will be little time to practice. There are pressing social ills facing them immediately.

We spent the afternoon visiting a new mammoth apartment complex on the east side of the city. The whole area of high rise apartments, set up in eight



Frank Cordaro and Michael Porzgen

## ...Jewelweed...

Running walking  
falling standing  
finding letting go

Jewelweed dill  
elderberry mint  
new friends found and known

I will remember your shape  
color texture taste

We will find each other  
in another  
different and the same

Inner Sanctuary-burning life,  
unplanned raging still,  
keep us warm this winter long  
running walking  
falling standing  
finding letting go

— Jessica Barnhill  
In farewell to the DMCW, 1993

clusters, houses over 100,000 people, one-fifth of the city's population. Caritas is starting a youth project in the complex.

These new apartments were prized possessions during communist rule. The buildings were poorly planned and cheaply made. With all the new building and reconstruction going on in the inner city and with rents on the rise, these new high-rises seem to be set up for failure. It is quickly becoming the newest poverty ghetto for the city.

During communist rule every waking hour for the children was organized and planned. That has all disappeared. The children in these high rises have little or no supervision. Gangs have formed and there are many reports of violent incidents. Violence against foreigners is especially high. In addition, unemployment runs at 30%. It's not a pretty picture, and it is going to get worse.

In the evening I spoke to 25 people at St. Michael's Lutheran Church. A most interesting thing happened during the question and answer period. Sr. Rita asked the question, "What can be done about the expected 10,000 evictions that are scheduled to take place in the next three months?"

This question sparked a lively discussion among the audience about what could be done. I was excited to see them brainstorm about possible options. The beginnings of a campaign may well have started that night.

Yet, it was heart wrenching to see the same people who were able to bring down the

government three years ago, now grappling with the very local problem of preventing 10,000 evictions. I'm reminded that the truly meaningful revolutions never happen at the top, but always on the local stage, at the personal level.

## Wednesday, Nov. 3:

We boarded a midnight train out of Leipzig and arrived in Hamburg at 8:30 a.m. We were greeted by Jens Schild, a student at the Raches Haus School of Social Workers. Jens, a Friend of the Catholic Worker, spent a year at CCNY in Wash. D.C.

The Raches Haus School has 150 students, all of them social work majors. I presented to about 60 students. After the talk we visited Hamburg's harbor area and walked through their infamous "Red Light" district on Herrmann Street.

We also went by the internationally known squatters houses along Harbor Street, where folks have been occupying six buildings on prime harbor property for almost 20 years.

We concluded my last full day in Germany with a train ride to Frankfurt where we spent the night with Heidi (yet another Friend of the Catholic Worker) before catching the plane for home.

I had a great time in Germany! A big thank you goes to Michael, my traveling partner, banker and keeper of the schedule. Plus he was the translator for all my talks. I could not have asked for a better partner and friend to share the experience. \*



# ... transitions ...

## Time is flowing... Meet Ed Bloomer

by Andrea Loeffelholz

**T**ime is flowing, careless of what happens or not. Time keeps everything else in motion: the air, the water, the growing and dying, acquaintances and good-byes, relationships, beginnings and endings.

Sometimes I feel like saying, "Stop! That's too fast. I'm not done yet. I haven't quite understood yet."

Still, time passes and carries with it all experience. Even so, the experience is not lost. It comes back when I'm ready.

My year here is almost over.

It seems hard to comprehend. Everything was new, strange to me. The doorknobs and locks, the food, the stores, the streets, the buildings, customs, perspectives, the way to get acquainted, to celebrate, to think, to deal with poverty, and yes, to communicate in English.

I got to know so many people and so many things have happened. I think it easily would fill a book. Since here is not the space for all that, I'd only like to ensure you that it was a very important year for me. I'm glad I could spend it here. And even if it will be over soon, it will always be with me, and so also the people I've learned to love. — Shalom \*



**H**i, my name is Ed Bloomer. I'm new in the Catholic Worker Community, but not new to Des Moines. I was originally here 10 years ago when we took over the soup kitchen on Indiana Ave. I was with a group of folks who came to Des Moines from the Community for Creative Nonviolence in Washington D.C., an organization that runs the largest shelter in the city.

In Des Moines at that time we called ourselves the KINDRED Community and along with the Catholic Worker we staffed a homeless shelter in the basement at Trinity Methodist Church.

I came back again in 1988-89 for a stint at KINDRED Community.

I arrived back this time in

Des Moines on August 6th to the Worker looking for a good faith-based structure with community in mind along with the works of mercy which the Worker is noted for.

A little bit about myself: I was born and raised in Louisville, Kentucky in a working class family of two great parents and a brother and sister who are all very supportive.

When I got out of the army (drafted) in 1968 I worked at a few local factories (tobacco and printing) until early 1969 when I started working at a local G.E. factory. I remained there until the middle of 1981; putting in 12 and a half years.

I then became an orderly for several months tending to a young handicapped man and later working with a retired elderly man.



Ed Bloomer

I arrived at CCNV during the Reagan-ville campaign in March of 1983 and I've been on my way in life ever since.

It has been fun writing this in my simple way and great to be back in community again. The time has flown by since I've been here and I hope to meet more of our friends and supporters. \*

## resistance notes

### Lakes and Prairies Life Community

On October 15-16 members of the Lakes and Prairies Life Community (LAPLC) met in Council Bluffs, IA to begin planning for a future civil disobedience action at Strategic Command (Strat-Com) near Omaha. Participants in the meeting discussed strategy and timing for an action, as well as the importance of a continued witness for peace and disarmament at Strat-Com. Strat-Com (formerly SAC) is the operational command center for all strategic nuclear weapons (land, air and sea launched) in the U.S. Arsenal. For more information contact Frank Cordaro (712) 325-8830.

The next gathering of LAPLC will be held Jan. 29-30, 1994, at 1812 N. 49th St., Milwaukee, WI. Everyone is welcome to attend. For more information Contact: Bonnie Urfer at NukeWatch (608) 767-3023.

LAPLC is a group of active Midwestern peacemakers who meet regularly to support one another, network, build community and plan nonviolent direct actions in resistance to militarism, primarily the threat posed by nuclear weapons.



### Help Prisoners of Conscience

(The following is a letter from Jonah House in Baltimore, MD)

On January 14, 1993, just after George Bush's last missile attack on Iraq, Michele Naar Obed and Gregory Boertje Obed poured their own blood and spray painted "Stop the Bombing of Iraq" and "Blood of the Victims" at the Fallon Federal Building in Baltimore.

At their recent November 3 trial by judge they were each sentenced to three years in prison; however, Judge Kircher stated that he would suspend (temporarily stop) the sentences provided that Greg and Michele agree to the conditions of an 18-month supervised probation. This they refused to do. Judge Kircher responded by withdrawing the suspended provisions of the sentences. Michele and Greg were then sent to jail to begin their three-

year terms.

We often expect jail time for our acts of conscience; however, these sentences are extremely harsh. According to the prosecution's statements, cost of the blood and paint clean up was \$920.00.

So, we are requesting that you send a letter to the judge expressing your thoughts about these sentences. This is the type of appeal that Greg and Michele would like you to make given that they are currently rejecting all legal appeals through the court system. Judges have the power to release prisoners or greatly reduce their sentences.

Please write to:

District Judge

Martin A. Kircher  
Eastside District Court  
1400 E. North Ave.  
Baltimore, MD 21213

### Call to Action Conference — October 30, 1993

In Chicago, 2300 reform-minded people gathered for the annual Call To Action National Conference. Over 60 Iowans were among the participants. The following is an excerpt from a report by Kathryn Epperson, a participant from Logan, Iowa.

Two days of speakers, theater and liturgies raised our spirits and our hopes. Each speaker put themselves and their futures on the line to speak out against the injustices in the Church.

The keynote speaker, Fr. Richard McBrien reminded us

that we can never put injustice behind us because "justice clamors for satisfaction." He told us to put our monies and our bodies on the line for a just Church.

Rosemary Ruether talked about the grave injustice directed toward women in the Church from the Pope on down.

Despite the work to be done, leaving the Catholic Church is not the solution. As Fr. McBrien concluded, "We are called to participate in the Church to give thanks to God.

To be separate from the Church is to be separated from the Eucharist. We must be fed."

◆  
The next Iowa Call To Action meeting is set for:

Saturday Jan. 8, 1994

10:00 a.m. to 2:00

Christ the King Church

5711 S.W. 9th St.

Des Moines Ia.,

Contact people:

Rev. Mr. John Ayers -

(515) 357-4498 or

Sr. Elaine Hagedorn -

(515) 277-6617 \*

### Strat-Com Resister Sentenced

On October 18th in U.S. Magistrate Court, Omaha, Bill Farmer was sentenced to two months in a halfway house in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Bill begins serving his sentence December 2nd. Farmer of Omaha was convicted of trespass at Offutt AFB. Letters of support can be sent to: Bill Farmer C/O C.H.H. Inc. 1228 S. Main Council Bluffs, IA 51503



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